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Identical letters dated 18 August 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of the decision taken by the Lebanese Council of Ministers on 16 August 2006 and a copy of the statement made by Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon, on that same date, both of which concern the deployment of the Lebanese army in South Lebanon (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 14, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Caroline **Ziade**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the identical letters dated 18 August 2006 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Decision of the Lebanese Cabinet

16 August 2006

The Lebanese cabinet has decided to deploy the Lebanese army in the two regions south of the Litani, Al-Arqoub Hasbaiya and Marjaayoun, and charged it with maintaining security in those regions and districts in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of the Defence Act. The mandate and terms of reference of the army in all of those regions shall be to defend the national territory, to maintain security and order, as well as to preserve and protect the property and livelihood of citizens and prevent the presence of forces of any kind not under the authority of the Lebanese State. In so doing, it shall ensure that the Blue Line is respected and that laws in force are applied with regard to any weapons not under the authority of the Lebanese State. The army and its leadership shall cooperate with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and coordinate with it as provided for by United Nations Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

The speech of His Excellency Mr. Fouad Siniora, Prime Minister of Lebanon, on the eve of the deployment of the Lebanese army in the South

The Grand Serail, Wednesday, 16 August 2006

My fellow Lebanese,

In the face of aggression you were and continue to be great. Those of you who resisted are models of heroism. Those of you who died are models of sacrifice. Those of you who stood fast are models of courage. You stood together against Israel's crime against all of Lebanon, and in your solidarity you triumphed over the ordeal. Therefore, now is not the time for division, discrimination or factional score-settling. It is the time for mutual support for the sake of the united homeland and strengthening the State.

It is the time to rise to momentous choices, for they are what hang in the balance and create a free and honourable life.

By your steadfastness in the face of the enemy and by opposing its war against Lebanon, you have confirmed that Israel no longer possesses irresistible power and an invincible army. Israel failed in its attempt to undermine your perseverance in your land your defence of it to the death. The swift return of those who were forced to leave their homes is yet another testament to their deep-rootedness in our good land and to the unremitting national resolve. This is also the resolve of all Lebanese, who should take pride in it and make it firmer. It charts our way forward, along the path of unity, sovereignty and freedom, so that we shall truly be one people with an independent State.

I can hardly find words to express my great pride in what has been achieved on the field of battle, in the reciprocal solidarity among the Lebanese, and in diplomatic forums. But the Israeli war machine has laid waste the length and breadth of Lebanon, killed, displaced and destroyed, and set the country back by decades.

Nevertheless, I am confident that our resolve to rise up and rebuild will match the level of our steadfastness. I also trust that all of us are well aware what is required for the security of Lebanon, the safety of all its citizens, its stability, and the right and duty of the State to extend its complete authority over all of its territory. It is no secret to you that laxity with respect to this right will put our country at risk of once again becoming a theatre of regional and international conflicts.

All this has not for one instant escaped our notice throughout the operational confrontations on the ground in Lebanon and throughout the difficult negotiations on which we have embarked to defend Lebanon and repel the threats of the protracted Israeli aggression against our people and our territory.

We have sought strength in national consensus, and have not retreated from our insistence on our firmly held national principles. We have spared no effort in persuading the international community to accord these principles their due consideration. True, Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) did not respond to all that we demanded of it. But it addresses our legitimate issues and concerns with great seriousness. It emphasizes Israeli withdrawal, international commitment to the sovereignty of Lebanon, support for it, and respect for its national decision-making. We engaged in a relentless diplomatic battle armed with our truth and our consensus and we were able to obtain essential revisions to the text of the resolution as originally proposed to the Security Council.

Whatever the justifiable objections to parts of the resolution, compared with what many expected or what the Israelis were trying for, it turned out to be a major success for Lebanese political and diplomatic efforts.

What I feel it is important to point out now is our insistence on progress towards liberating the Shab'a farms. This insistence was at the heart or our wide-ranging international, political and diplomatic activity over the course of the past year. We proceeded on two tracks to work for the liberation of the Shab'a farms: the track of working for border demarcation by direct agreement with our sister-State Syria, and the track of having recourse to the international community, given that the current problem is one of Israeli occupation rather than a territorial dispute between Lebanon and Syria. The efforts made are evident in the recent Security Council resolution. It takes seriously the demand of the Government's seven-point plan regarding Israeli withdrawal from the Shab'a farms and their temporary placement under United Nations jurisdiction. The resolution calls on the Secretary-General to deal swiftly with the issue and submit practical proposals to the Security Council. It therefore returns the subject of the Shab'a farms to the Security Council's agenda after it had been thought that resolution 425 (1978) had disposed of it. This is something unprecedented in the history of the United Nations.

All this impels us to follow up and redouble the political and diplomatic efforts with the international community and the attempts with Syria to achieve the liberation of this precious piece of our territory. I therefore continue to call on Syria

to agree to demarcate the borders and turn over the necessary maps to the United Nations, even as we continue to follow up with the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

As for the Lebanese prisoners, despite the deficiencies of resolution 1701 (2006) in this regard, we shall redouble our efforts to secure their release and ensure their prompt return to their families, their homes and their freedom.

My fellow Lebanese,

The aggression that Lebanon has been subjected to and which we faced together compels us to hold fast to our unity and independence, to a free State which protects and does not threaten, a State which safeguards and does not squander. Lebanon was prevented from strengthening its sovereignty by the brutal conditions of the Israeli occupation and the trusteeship that began in the 1990s and lasted until 2005, the year in which Prime Minister Hariri was martyred and in which the Syrian army left Lebanon. The Lebanese people have paid dearly with their blood, security and freedom in order to maintain the country's unity and have endured the violence of enemies and the burden of friends — yet, in spite of all difficulties, they never abandoned this unity, the unity of the people and the State.

A strong and democratic State, a State possessed of freedom of decision and full sovereignty, a State in which all Lebanese have equal rights and responsibilities, is the ultimate victory we Lebanese can achieve. This requires us to collaborate and employ all our capabilities in order to build a strong and caring State for all Lebanese, a State which protects their rights and does not discriminate between them. Only you, the steadfast, industrious, productive citizens who hold fast to your unity and nation, can build such a State — a State for which there is no substitute and no equal. We all know the harm inflicted on the country by the concept of statelets and by sectarianism at the expense of national unity.

National accord and unity, which is much talked about these days, cannot be achieved without a single, free and independent State which alone has decision-making power and undivided authority. No internal or external actor, however powerful, should have the right to lead the country and its citizens in whatever direction it pleases and require that everyone follow along behind or risk being labelled "dividers" and "destroyers" of national unity or having their national and Arab loyalties questioned.

We Lebanese want a strong State, a strong army and strong democratic institutions and we will not enter into regional or international alliances or projects. From the beginning we have taken up Arab issues, foremost among those being the issue of Palestine and its people, and have striven for Arab unity. It is for this which we have paid, unquestioningly and benevolently, with what is most precious and dear to us. We see no place for ourselves outside this identity and this role. We will not allow the resistance and sacrifice of the Lebanese people to be used, as some have tried, as a means of blackmailing us, or of violating our unity and dignity, or disparaging our democratic systems by teaching us lessons that our brave people have no need of, or to make threats that are rejected by every free and proud Lebanese.

It is the duty of all us of to sustain Lebanon the nation, Lebanon the State, and Lebanon as our shared life. We will continue to work through our constitutional institutions in the light of the values and practices of a civil and democratic State.

We will fully implement the requirements of the Taif national accord and abide by the seven points adopted unanimously by the Council of Ministers and respect Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Therefore, we will dispatch the army, assisted by UNIFIL, to deploy in the South.

Today we send the army from the nation to the nation. We send it for the sake of our people in the South, for the sake of those who remained in their homes, and for the sake of those returning to their homes. The army will defend their lands, preserve their homes, jobs and livelihoods, safeguard their liberty and security, and enforce the law. The mission of the Lebanese army in the South will be to defend the rights of citizens and to defend the right and responsibility of the State to extend its sovereignty over the entire territory of the nation and serve as the people's guardian and protector. There will be no areas or places that are off-limits or out of the army's control, no military installations other than its own, and no armed groups other than its forces so that there will be no armed force not under the authority of the Lebanese State.

The Lebanese Army, the army of all Lebanon, the army of all Lebanese, comes to you. Rally around the army and stand by it as it stands with you and for you.

My fellow citizens,

The State will assume all its relief and reconstruction responsibilities with the assistance of our Arab brothers and our many friends throughout the world. This will be done transparently and without discrimination against anyone. We do not do this as a favour to anyone because the State belongs to everyone and it is the State's responsibility to safeguard the rights of all its citizens. We will adopt the fastest and most efficient working methods.

We must work seriously and quickly to achieve national and economic revitalization, shake off stagnation, stimulate growth, and find employment opportunities for young people. None of this will be possible without political stability. Political stability will renew the faith of the Lebanese people in the future and compel our brothers and friends to return to Lebanon, help it and invest in it. We pledge to redouble our efforts and work with you all — the State, the people, civil society, and the private sector.

The Lebanese all stood firm in the face of the enemy, led by the people of the South, Baalbek, the southern suburbs of Beirut and other areas of Lebanon. The State owes a debt to those Lebanese that must be honoured without hesitation or prevarication. They were also the State's protective and supportive shield. The State must do all that is within its power to keep them in the fold, win their confidence and look after their rights and interests. The State is the State of our people in the South and of all the afflicted areas. It is their State both by right and by responsibility, and this implies employment, comfort, security and a commitment to them on the part of the State.

The Lebanese Government, in cooperation with local and international experts and in coordination with Arab and international construction, economic and financial institutions, will lose no time in developing reconstruction plans and the necessary economic programmes and policies. These will be implemented with great transparency, effectiveness and speed. We want to be and to remain equal to the gravity of the situation and to the aspirations and hopes of the Lebanese people.

The South is in our hearts and in our minds. It is present today in the hearts and minds of everyone who loves Lebanon, fears for it and is mindful of its experience. The steadfastness and resistance of its villages and towns have made their names a part of the memory of every Arab youth.

We are faced with great responsibilities and must take them up if we do not want to lose the freedom for which we paid with the blood of our martyrs, the steadfastness and unity of our people and the efforts of the freedom-makers of our past and present.

We are faced with momentous challenges, challenges that relate to the meaning of Lebanon, its existence, its future and the nature of its political system. Our beloved, noble and proud country has passed through some difficult and cruel weeks. We need to face ourselves, our consciences, our morals and our responsibilities. A great amount of work must be done in order to strengthen the State and the army, reinforce democracy and accountability and achieve a high level of performance. This is the proper language, which we should not hesitate to use, for the establishment of a free and strong State, a State which is capable of extending its sovereignty over its entire territory through its legitimate armed forces. This means that only the State may retain armed forces, as you, the people of Lebanon, agreed to in the Charter of National Reconciliation at Taif and re-emphasized in the seven points adopted unanimously by your Government. I do not act on behalf of a group, sect, political group or party, but as the Prime Minister of Lebanon. There is room only for the State and this State cannot be monopolized, exclusively possessed, surrendered or bargained away.

My fellow Lebanese,

We are faced with the challenge of preserving the State in order to preserve the nation, preserving unity of decision-making in order to preserve the democratic, civilian political system. Every Lebanese is entitled to preservation of his life, his property, his dignity and his freedom, and the only means to achieve that is the constitutional State, its democratic system and its national army. That State cannot be replaced by statelets or anything of the kind.

Let us all stand for ourselves, our interests and our affiliations so that we may continue to have a free and independent State. Let us all stand by that State so that our beloved nation may continue in being. And let us all stand by the nation so that Lebanon will remain. Lebanon will indeed remain, Lebanon will rise again, and its future will rise from the South, the South of Lebanon, thanks to the zeal and determination of all Lebanese, for the sake of all Lebanon.

Long live Lebanon! Long live the people of Lebanon!